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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000158

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [MCAP](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#)  
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SUBJECT: DAS MADISON DISCUSSES MERIDA INITIATIVE IN  
GUATEMALA

Classified By: Ambassador James M. Derham for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) Summary. WHA Deputy Assistant Secretary Kirsten Madison visited Guatemala January 28 - February 1. During her week-long visit, she met with local and national government officials, civil society representatives, business leaders, Peace Corps Volunteers and recipients of USG-funded programs in rural communities. DAS Madison affirmed the USG's continued interest in Guatemala and the region, especially in collaborating to improve the security situation through the Merida Initiative and building upon the positive results of CAFTA. End Summary.

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DAS Madison Discusses Merida Initiative  
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12. (C) DAS Madison discussed regional security, focusing on the Merida Initiative, and regional prosperity in her meetings with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Government. She underscored the importance of concerted regional action to address transnational threats. She commended Minister of Foreign Affairs Harold Rodas for Guatemala's leadership and support for U.N. peacekeeping missions in Haiti and the Congo, and requested Guatemala's assistance to create a dialogue in the region on the future of Cuba, noting the important role other countries with greater access to Cuba could play in influencing a democratic transition in Cuba. Rodas indicated his interest in having a Cuba dialogue with the U.S. and in perhaps drawing in other countries who would be constructive.

13. (C) DAS Madison also acknowledged Guatemala's disappointment over failing to qualify for MCC funding and stressed that the MCC indicators are not open to political judgment and must be met fully. She expressed the hope that USG assistance programs would help Guatemala meet the requirements for a threshold program in the future. Rodas appeared very receptive to DAS Madison's comments and raised the issue of immigration. He said the GOG was developing an integrated program to support migrants' rights and provide micro-enterprise opportunities to deportees.

14. (C) In her meetings with Minister of Defense Marco Tulio Garcia Franco and Minister of Government Vinicio Gomez, DAS Madison lauded the GOG for its cooperation with the USG. She informed MOD Garcia Franco of the advances made in the U.S. Congress with regard to IMET/FMF funding, and commented on the fact that a certification process must still take place in the coming months. She thanked Minister Gomez for Guatemala's participation in the regional meeting in El Salvador to discuss the priorities and funding of the Merida Initiative. She also recognized the Ministry's important work in vetting the Civilian National Police (PNC) and

strongly encouraged full vetting of senior officers as soon as possible. She confirmed the February arrival of four, USG-funded counternarcotics helicopters. Gomez stated that he understood the U.S. Congress concerns about joint civilian-military patrols, but pointed out that the police cannot tackle the crime problem alone at this time. Among other things, only the military can provide the airlift support needed for many law enforcement operations.

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CICIG Needs Security  
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15. (C) International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) Commissioner Carlos Castresana discussed the immediate challenges he faces in getting CICIG up and running. He confirmed that he has ten emblematic cases ready for investigation, but that there has been little progress due to lack of security for his staff. He expected to add 40 investigators to his team by March, but will not be able to let them start work until he can guarantee their security. Castresana requested that the USG continue to publicly support CICIG not only in Guatemala, but also at the U.N.

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Drugs and Thugs  
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16. (C) The Guatemalan Navy warmly received DAS Madison in Puerto San Jose where she had the opportunity to witness firsthand the immediate challenges faced by the Navy in its efforts to combat narcotrafficking and alien smuggling. The local navy commander said he has only five ships at the port, and receives a limited ration of fuel every four months. As a result, the Navy can only respond to confirmed intelligence reports of illicit activities, and is unable to perform regular patrols of the 27,000 nautical square miles of Pacific coastline, which comprises 85 percent of Guatemala's continental shelf territory. It also has no air support, he said. Guatemalan navy officers briefed DAS Madison on their efforts to stand up a vetted counternarcotics unit with the support of Embassy Milgroup, DAO, NAS and DEA.

17. (U) DAS Madison also toured the NAS-funded successful model police precinct and the USAID-supported 24-hour court in the high-crime zone of Villa Nueva. USAID introduced Madison to a community policing program that demonstrated the benefits of a public-private partnership. At the Ciudad del Sol school, PNC officers, school officials, students, parents and private sector representatives spoke about their different roles in implementing the program and the positive results they have achieved in improving the security environment of the community by reducing gang activity in the area.

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Visits to Assistance Programs  
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18. (U) DAS Madison spent two days visiting rural communities and local farmers who are receiving USG assistance to make them more competitive in the international market, and meeting with Peace Corps Volunteers. The trip included stops at USAID-funded projects in Concepcion and San Antonio Palopo, Solola. DAS Madison visited Mariano Canu, a farmer with whom President Bush met and praised for taking full advantage of CAFTA, and met with Edgar Augusto Coroy Juarez, the new mayor of Santa Cruz Balanya. Coroy enthusiastically informed Madison that one of his goals as mayor is to develop tourism and create a tour to trace the route taken by President Bush. Coroy said that if Che Guevara could have a tourist route in Bolivia, Guatemala could have a tourist route recreating President Bush's visit.

19. (U) In Concepcion, Solola, DAS Madison met with board members of Concepcion's Association for Integrated Development (ADICO) and visited their farm. With the help of

USAID, ADICO farmers are now diversifying with non-traditional crops and have contracted with a U.S. supplier to grow and export sweet onions. Indigenous artisans in San Antonio Palopo introduced DAS Madison to their new line of weaving and ceramic products they will launch in Guatemala City on March 12. The artisans, supported by a post-Hurricane Stan USAID project, contracted a New York consultant to train them about patterns and color combinations. The members of the group highlighted the benefits of the program, most importantly being able to provide an education for their children rather than having to send them on to the streets to beg.

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Press Outreach  
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¶10. (U) DAS Madison kicked off her week-long January 28 - February 1 visit to Guatemala with a discussion of USG policies towards Central America and the Caribbean on a local, English-language morning radio program. DAS Madison defined the major policy issues for Central America as security and prosperity and discussed the Merida Initiative and the importance of CAFTA. She debunked the common misperception that the USG is ignoring Latin America highlighting some of the accomplishments of the past eight years, including the fact that the U.S. signed ten free trade agreements with Latin America, disbursed USD 1 billion to the region through MCC programs, inaugurated a health care region through MCC programs, inaugurated a health care training center in Panama, negotiated a biofuels partnership with Brazil, and doubled assistance to the region. She also noted that President Bush visited more Latin American countries than any other U.S. president.

¶11. (U) DAS Madison cleared this message prior to transmission.  
Derham